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COUNTRY Soviet Zone of Germany

REPORT NO.

TOPIC Koethen Air Field

EVALUATION see below

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DATE OF CONTENT December 1949 and January 1950

DATE OBTAINED

DATE PREPARED 28 February 1950

REFERENCES

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PAGES 3 ENCLOSURES (NO. & TYPE) 1 sketch on ditto

REMARKS

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1. Four twin-engine aircraft, six biplanes and from 30 to 35 single-engine planes were parked at the Koethen (M 52/D 95) airfield on 7 January 1950. Ambulance [redacted] trucks were assigned to the field:

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Some of these trucks were seen in town hauling food rations.

Two cantonment buildings, each 100 meters square, and several small cantonment buildings with bombs were on the south edge of the field. Each bomb was about 100 centimeters long and 40 centimeters in diameter. Ammunition was stored in four cantonment buildings on the north edge of the field.

2. Two German workers employed at the field stated: The old **Baasdorfer-**strasse was converted into a taxiway, 25 meters wide. A new detour was scheduled to run 400 meters east of the field. An area of from 160 to 180 "Morgen" (about 100 to 110 acres) was confiscated in early December 1949 and expansion work started at the field. The new runway was to be 60 x 1,700 meters. Construction work, done by 500 workers, was to be completed by July 1950. The construction cost was estimated at 9 million marks. The runway was to have a depth of 30 centimeters, 75 to 80 percent of it filled with gravel, topped by a 6 to 7.5-centimeter concrete layer. A dredger had arrived.

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3. There was no flying at the field on 10 January 1950. Fourteen single-engine aircraft were parked in front of the two eastern hangars and three twin-engine and two single-engine planes in front of the western hangar. A firing range, about 50 x 400 meters, protected on both sides by earthwalls and logs, was on the eastern edge of the field. A grab dredger had excavated an about 1 x 50 x 400-meter area south of the firing range. One third of the length of the construction site had been secured by woodwork (5-meter long beams). As more ground was being surveyed the construction area was apparently to be enlarged. Three ammunition sheds, the largest about 10 x 35 meters, were on the south edge

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of the field, to which a railroad spur track ran. More bombs and shells were piled nearby in the open. Empty bomb cases were scattered around. Estimated length of bombs: 1 meter, diameter: 30 cm. Four cantonment buildings were west of the ammunition dump. Large quantities of recently arrived cement pipes, each 1 meter in diameter, were stored between the ammunition dump and the cantonment buildings. The pipes were probably for use in a drainage system. Surveying work was being done outside the field. Local residents said that adjacent fields had been confiscated to expand the airfield. Three battalions, each equipped with four heavy mortars, were drilling at the airfield.

4. There was little flying at the field from 19 December 1949 to 20 January 1950 as the weather was mostly unfavorable. About 45 aircraft of four types were parked outside the hangars on 20 January 1950.

5. Description of the few fighters, which were probably stationed at the field temporarily:

Three-bladed propeller, landing gear retracting inward, Pitot tube at right wing, wings faired into fuselage, cannon firing through propeller hub, machine gun through propeller disk.

6. Description of two-seat bombers:

Three-bladed propeller, all-metal fairing, landing gear faired and apparently retracting outward, two cannons under wings, a third presumably firing through propeller hub, rear gunner's station in entirely glazed cockpit, engine with liquid cooling. A block, presumably for the installation of a loop antenna, mounted about 1 1/2 meters forward of rudder assembly, but no loop antenna or the like was seen on any plane. Main wheel not retractable, Pitot tube on right wing. Span about 15 meters, length about 11 meters, height up to upper edge of cockpit about 3.30 meters. No bomb release mechanism was observed. Engine cowling and tip of rudder assembly painted blue.

7. A construction engineer employed at the field stated: A large-scale construction project was under way at the field. At first cantonment buildings were built at the southeast corner of the field and the railroad spur track was extended in that direction. The construction of a 60 x 1,200-meter runway was to be completed by mid-Summer of 1950. Construction work on the runway of the Dessau (M 22/3 00) airfield was nearing completion.

8. North of the field kasernes there was an ammunition dump of the Soviet Army units stationed at the field (for location see Annex 1). The soldiers wore red-brown coats, black epaulets. The ammunition dump was especially fenced in and consisted of four dug-in bunker-like sheds, each about 3 x 15 meters, and covered by a 1 1/2 meter earth layer. The firing range on the western edge of the field was being considerably enlarged. The fuel dump on the eastern edge of the field was removed to the southwest corner. It consisted of 11 dug-in and 6 surface containers of medium size. The ammunition and bomb dump in the southeast corner of the field was being fenced in and the ammunition stored in the open protected by a roof. A new wooden shed was about 2 1/2 x 6 x 11 meters. Five new cantonment buildings, which were erected west of the ammunition dump in late-December 1949, were presumably to serve as billets for workers. Many drainage pipes, each 100 centimeters long and 50 centimeters in diameter, and gravel were stored near the cantonment buildings. A concrete mixer

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and a dredger were also there.

9. The field was still occupied by about 700 to 800 air force personnel. It was strictly guarded.

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Comment:

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a. [redacted] that expansion work was done at the airfield and on the runway. The existence of the ammunition or bomb dump accounts for the presence of a ground attack regiment. Part of the stored ammunition is apparently assigned to an army units. Besides the ground attack regiment, an air reconnaissance regiment is assumed to be stationed at the field.

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b. The attached photograph of the ammunition piles, taken by another source*, is transmitted in answer to a special inquiry on the presence of ammunition dumps.

Annex : Koethen Airfield

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